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Harper child care comments an attempt to bolster unpopular plan

OTTAWA — Prime Minister Stephen Harper is resorting to divisive tactics and distortions to try to get his unpopular child care plan through Parliament, says the chair of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC).

Debra Mayer said that the child care news release issued by the Prime Minister's Office yesterday shows the government is worried about the growing opposition to its child care proposals from parents and the provinces. The Prime Minister has also met with lobby groups that support his child care plan in an effort to try to sway public opinion, but has refused a request to meet with the CCAAC.

"Parents understand that the government's proposal for a taxable allowance of \$1200 a year to parents with children under six discriminates and won't create child care," she said. "We believe parents deserve income support. But the Harper plan is unfair. It discriminates against single-parent families and those with more than one income earner. Since it taxes the lowest income earner in a family, it also disproportionately benefits the wealthy."

Mayer said the allowance does nothing to create much-needed child care spaces. "It is like giving money to parents to educate their children without schools or teachers, or money for health care with no hospitals or doctors."

Even in Alberta, considered a Conservative support-base, a majority of people (50.3% versus 36.6%) say they would prefer the expansion of child care services over the proposed taxable allowance.

The other part of the Conservative child care plan—giving tax incentives to employers to create new spaces—has been a non-starter, even with business leaders.

Mayer said the solution to the child care crisis is stable funding to the provinces to build a comprehensive child care program. "That means creating flexible community-based services for parents of all income levels, whether they are in the workforce, studying or at home."

She also took aim at Harper's comments that his plan will sidestep child care academics and researchers by going directly to parents. "Research is what responsible policy-makers do to ensure their programs have the intended impact. Yet the Prime Minister has produced no research whatsoever to show that his plan will produce his stated results."

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The Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada was founded in 1983 to promote quality, inclusive, publicly funded, non-profit child care accessible to all. The association's more than 140,000 members include parents, caregivers, researchers and students; and women's, anti-poverty, labour, social justice, disability and rural organizations.